

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS,
NEUROPSYCHIATRIC BUILDING
(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 25)
(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)
(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks
Division, Administrative Building)
VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division
1 Jefferson Barracks Drive
Saint Louis
Independent City
Missouri

HABS MO-1943-M
MO-1943-M

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, NEUROPSYCHIATRIC BUILDING (BUILDING 25)

HABS No. MO-1943-M

- Location:** Building 25, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,
St. Louis, Missouri
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri
UTM Coordinates 16 7258425 E 9965991 N
- Date of Construction:** 1929
- Designer:** U.S. Veterans Administration (VA)
- Contractor:** Unknown
- Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Present Use:** Offices, National Canteen Service
- Significance:** The Neuropsychiatric Building was built in 1929 as an early addition to the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks. The building was the site of the hospital's psychiatric program during the time when the hospital was a general medicine facility. In 1952, the Veterans Administration, Jefferson Barracks, campus was converted to a neuropsychiatric hospital, and large new specialized neuropsychiatric buildings were opened to handle psychiatric treatment on the campus. After 1952, the Neuropsychiatric Building was converted to a general medicine space for hospital patients. The building was later converted to a drug and alcohol ward, and then finally remodeled into administrative space during the 1990s.
- Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

Description:

The Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25) is a three-story stucco-clad building with a hipped roof. The building is thirteen bays wide and three bays deep, and has a reinforced-concrete structural frame composed of concrete posts and concrete floor slabs. The wall spaces in between the concrete posts are filled in with brick or terra-cotta block. None of this structure is visible on the outside of the building because it is covered by stucco. The building faces an asphalt road and is positioned across the road from the east wing of the Main Hospital (Building 1).

The west wall of the Neuropsychiatric Building is the facade, which has a symmetrical composition with a center projecting block with a hipped roof, flanking side wings, also with hipped roofs, and two gabled end pavilions. The center block is three bays wide and has a replacement aluminum and glass door on the first floor, and an arched window opening flanked by pilasters and two rectangular openings on the second floor. The transom of the center arched window opening is closed in, and the opening also features arched stucco trim with a keystone. Decoration around the arched window includes stucco stringcourses, pilasters, circular medallions, and recessed panels. The wood fan tympanum of the arched opening appears to be a piece of original wood ornament. The third floor has a rectangular center window flanked by recessed stucco panels and two windows. A gable over the central window contains a triangular wood sunburst motif, along with a cornice and raking cornice.

The flanking side wings of the facade are plainer than the central block and are composed of stucco walls, replacement windows, and a white cornice and gutter. Each of these wings also has two arched wood dormers on the hipped roof; each dormer has a replacement window and wood trim, including a wood fan motif above the window. Each of the gabled end pavilions have rusticated bases, replacement windows, rectangular stucco panels, and a gable with cornice, raking cornice, and a louvered triangular opening.

The north wall of the building features rusticated bases, replacement windows, stucco rectangular panels, a stucco frieze, and a white cornice and gutter. The south wall has features that are similar to the north wall but also has a large stair tower with replacement windows and stucco wall covering. One arched dormer sits on the hipped roof on both the north and south walls.

The rear (east) wall includes a three-bay center block with stucco pilasters, rectangular panels, an entablature, metal replacement windows, a white cornice and gutter, and a wood arched dormer with wood trim. The flanking wings have replacement windows, rectangular stucco panels and entablature, and a white cornice and gutter. The east wall has one central dormer on the center block and a total of four arched dormers on the wings, two dormers on each wing. The central dormer and the dormers on the side wings have

louvered openings. This wall also has two gabled end pavilions, each of which has a rusticated base, replacement windows, rectangular stucco panels, an entablature, a white cornice, and a gable with raking cornice and a triangular louvered opening.

The interior of the building has been completely remodeled. No original features were observed on any floor except a staircase that sits north of the main entrance and appeared to have original metal risers with recessed panels, and original treads. The remainder of the interior features gypsum board and ceramic-tile walls, tile and carpeted floors, and acoustical drop ceilings with recessed fluorescent lighting.

History:

As part of a campaign of additions and improvements to the Jefferson Barracks facility in the late 1920s, the U.S. Veterans Bureau added a neuropsychiatric treatment building to the hospital in 1929. Psychiatric treatment facilities have been present at the Jefferson Barracks VA facility since its beginning—the 1922 plans for the Main Hospital (Building 1) show that the first floor of the east wing had a small psychiatric that was fairly small, consisting of four nearly identical adjacent rooms, with each room measuring approximately 7'5" x 13'0". But the Main Hospital's psychiatric unit could have accommodated only a very small amount of treatment activities due to its small size.¹

The construction of the Neuropsychiatric Building in 1929 fits into an overall pattern of facility expansion at the Veterans Bureau facility (after 1930, the Veterans Administration [VA]) at Jefferson Barracks. The Main Hospital building originally contained general medicine facilities but also accommodated kitchen, dining, psychiatric, and recreational functions.² Several of the new buildings constructed at the hospital from 1929 to 1940 were specialized facilities that accommodated some of the non-medical functions originally housed in the Main Hospital. So, for example, the Dining Room (Building 23) was constructed in 1937, which allowed some of the kitchen and dining room space in the Main Hospital to be converted to general medicine use.³ In like manner, the construction of the Neuropsychiatric Building in 1929 provided a much larger and more suitable space for psychiatric treatment than the small set of rooms provided in the Main Hospital, thereby allowing more space in the Main Hospital to be devoted to general medicine instead of psychiatric treatment.

¹ Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office, *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Hospital Building*, 1922, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Veterans Administration, *Alterations to Hospital Building No. 1, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.*, 1937-1939, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Original floor plans for the Neuropsychiatric Building were drawn up by staff of the Veterans Bureau. The plans show three floors, each with a similar layout, although the patient capacity of each floor varied. The wards in the hospital varied, with each floor including a mix of wards having two, three, four, six, and nine beds. Each floor also had at least two single rooms. The first floor accommodated thirty beds, the second floor had thirty-six beds, and the third floor had the largest capacity at forty-three beds.⁴

Aside from bedroom space, the first floor included a lobby, toilets, storage facilities, a service room, and separate offices for nurses and doctors. The second floor featured a large day room, offices for doctors and nurses, dressing and undressing rooms, and toilet facilities. The third floor was similar but also had an office for nurses (none for doctors), and featured a tub room with a single bathtub as well as what the plans referred to as a continuous bath, with two tubs.⁵

The Neuropsychiatric Building reflects a fairly basic approach to a mental-health treatment facility that emphasized bed space for patients. Most of the building is taken up by ward spaces and bath and toilet facilities. Some office space is provided for doctors and nurses, but separate exam rooms or specialized rooms for specific therapy techniques are not included on the main three floors. The inclusion of day rooms would have allowed at least some of the patients to get out of their ward rooms and possibly engage in recreational activities or group socialization outside of the ward.⁶

However, the original floor plans for the basement of the Neuropsychiatric Building were not found, and it is therefore difficult to fully assess the facilities included in the building. For example, basement space could have been used for specialized therapy rooms or for recreational or occupational therapy uses, similar to the layout of the Main Hospital (Building 1), whose original 1922 floor plans show occupational therapy and recreational spaces located in the basement.

Both the first and second floors of the Neuropsychiatric Building had small kitchens, but no dining room spaces were included in the plans for the main three floors of the building.⁷ Presumably, either the Neuropsychiatric Building had kitchen and dining room facilities in its basement, or the psychiatric patients took their meals in the large dining facility in the Main Hospital (Building 1) from 1929 to 1936, and then may have used the Dining Hall (Building 23) after it was completed in 1937. Both the Main Hospital and the Dining Hall were across the street from the Neuropsychiatric Building, and an

⁴ U.S. Veterans Administration, *Neuropsychiatric Building, Building No. 25, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.*, 1929, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

underground tunnel connected the Neuropsychiatric Building to the Main Hospital. Patients could dine in the Main Hospital, accessing it through the underground tunnel, or once they were in the Main Hospital, they could use the above-ground connector system to go to the Dining Hall. The patients then could return to their wards in the Neuropsychiatric Building without going outdoors.

The Neuropsychiatric Building continued to serve as the psychiatric facility at the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital through the 1930s and 1940s. From 1950 to 1952, the Jefferson Barracks campus was converted to a neuropsychiatric hospital, and more modern facilities for psychiatric treatment were built on the campus. A wave of reforms in psychiatric treatment took place in the late 1940s, leading to changes in the design of psychiatric treatment facilities. After World War II, new and remodeled psychiatric hospitals featured improved design such as specialized treatment rooms, more administrative space, exam and interview spaces, nursing stations, and more space devoted to patient recreation and therapy.⁸ Four large new psychiatric treatment buildings (the Admissions Building, Infirm Building, the Spinal Cord Injury and Tuberculosis Building, and the Disturbed Building), reflecting the new philosophies in mental health hospital design, were completed at the Jefferson Barracks facility by 1952. Compared to these facilities, the 1920s-era layout of the Neuropsychiatric Building would have been quite outdated.

Once new psychiatric facilities were completed at the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital, it is nearly certain that the Neuropsychiatric Building was converted to other uses. Both an early conceptual site layout from 1948 for the Jefferson Barracks VA psychiatric hospital⁹ and a 1950 master plan map of the Jefferson Barracks VA neuropsychiatric hospital¹⁰ show the Neuropsychiatric Building as a general medicine facility. First-floor and second-floor plans of the former Neuropsychiatric Building dating to 1955 show a series of two-to-six-bed wards, a few single rooms, a nurses' station, and two large solaria, one on each floor. Each of these two floors had bed space for approximately thirty patients. The building's layout clearly shows that it was in use for hospital purposes at that time, but the drawings do not indicate the specific function of the building.¹¹

The building may have been serving in the mid-to-late 1950s as an annex to provide additional space for the general medicine operations that were concentrated across the

⁸ Paul Haun and Z. M. Lebensohn, "New Trends in Hospital Design," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948), 555-564.

⁹ Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Site Plan*, 1948, on file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

¹⁰ Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Master Plan*, 1950, on file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

¹¹ Maguolo and Quick, Architects and Engineers, *Construction Drawings for Additions and Alterations, Veterans Administration, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., Building No. 25*, April 1955, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

street at the Main Hospital. Although the Jefferson Barracks VA hospital was a neuropsychiatric hospital after 1952, it still maintained a small general medicine hospital so that psychiatric patients in need of surgery or other medical treatments could be treated at Jefferson Barracks, without having to be transferred to the VA's main general medicine facility, the John Cochran VA Hospital in downtown St. Louis.

The Neuropsychiatric Building continued to serve as a general medical space for an unknown amount of time. The windows were replaced in 1981, and the building was later completely gutted and remodeled on the interior. By 1990, the building was characterized on VA facility lists as the Drug and Alcoholic Wards.¹² Currently, the only original features left in the building are the treads and risers associated with an original staircase that is next to the main lobby on the first floor. The building is currently used as office space for the food service contractor that operates the medical center's cantina. Redevelopment plans for the medical center do not call for the demolition of this building in the near future.

Sources:

Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office. *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Hospital Building*. 1922. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Haun, Paul, and Z. M. Lebensohn. "New Trends in Hospital Design." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948).

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*. 1990. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

¹² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*, 1990, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

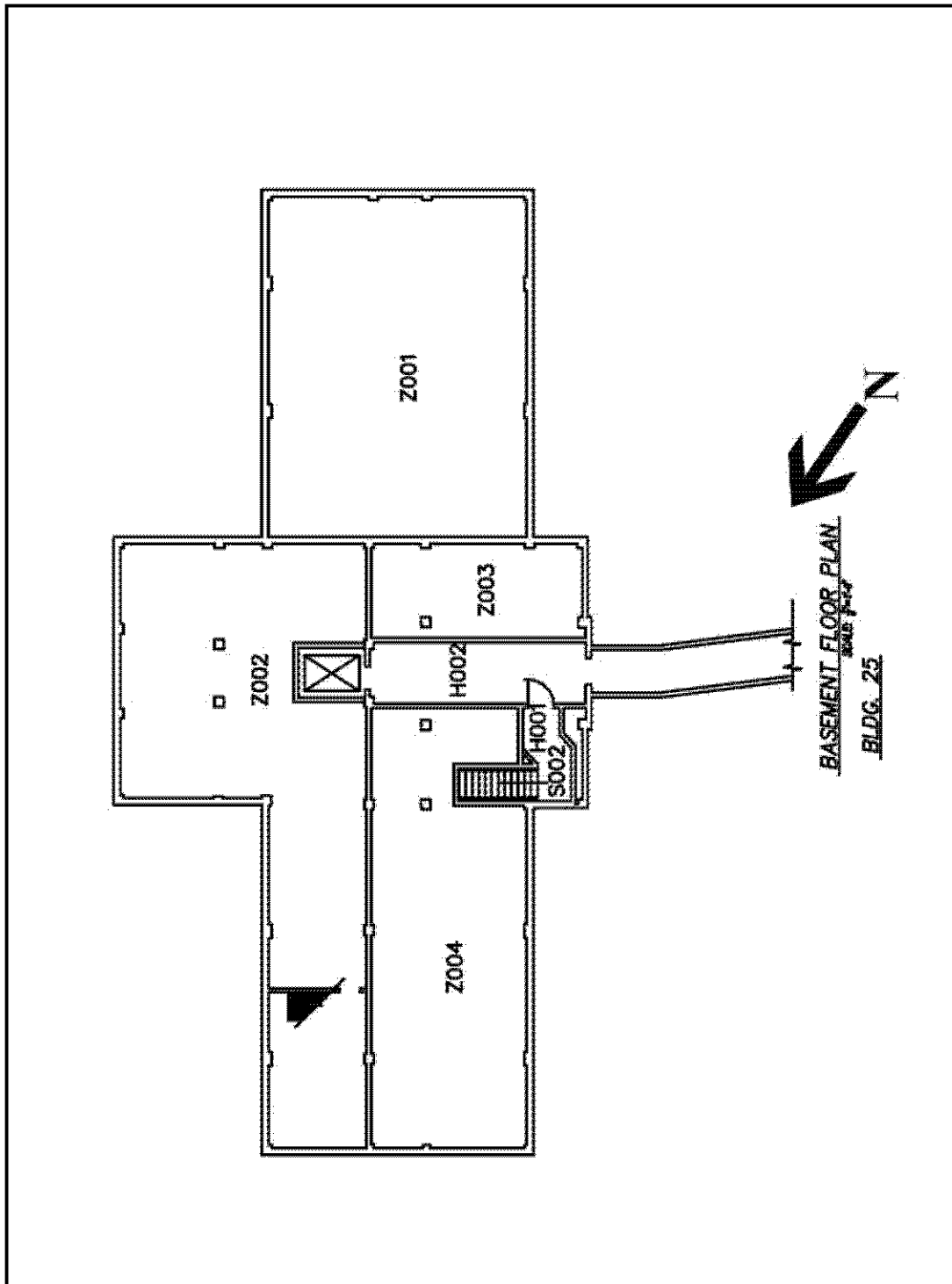
U.S. Veterans Administration. *Alterations to Hospital Building No. 1, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1937-1939. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

U.S. Veterans Administration. *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Site Plan.* 1948. On file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

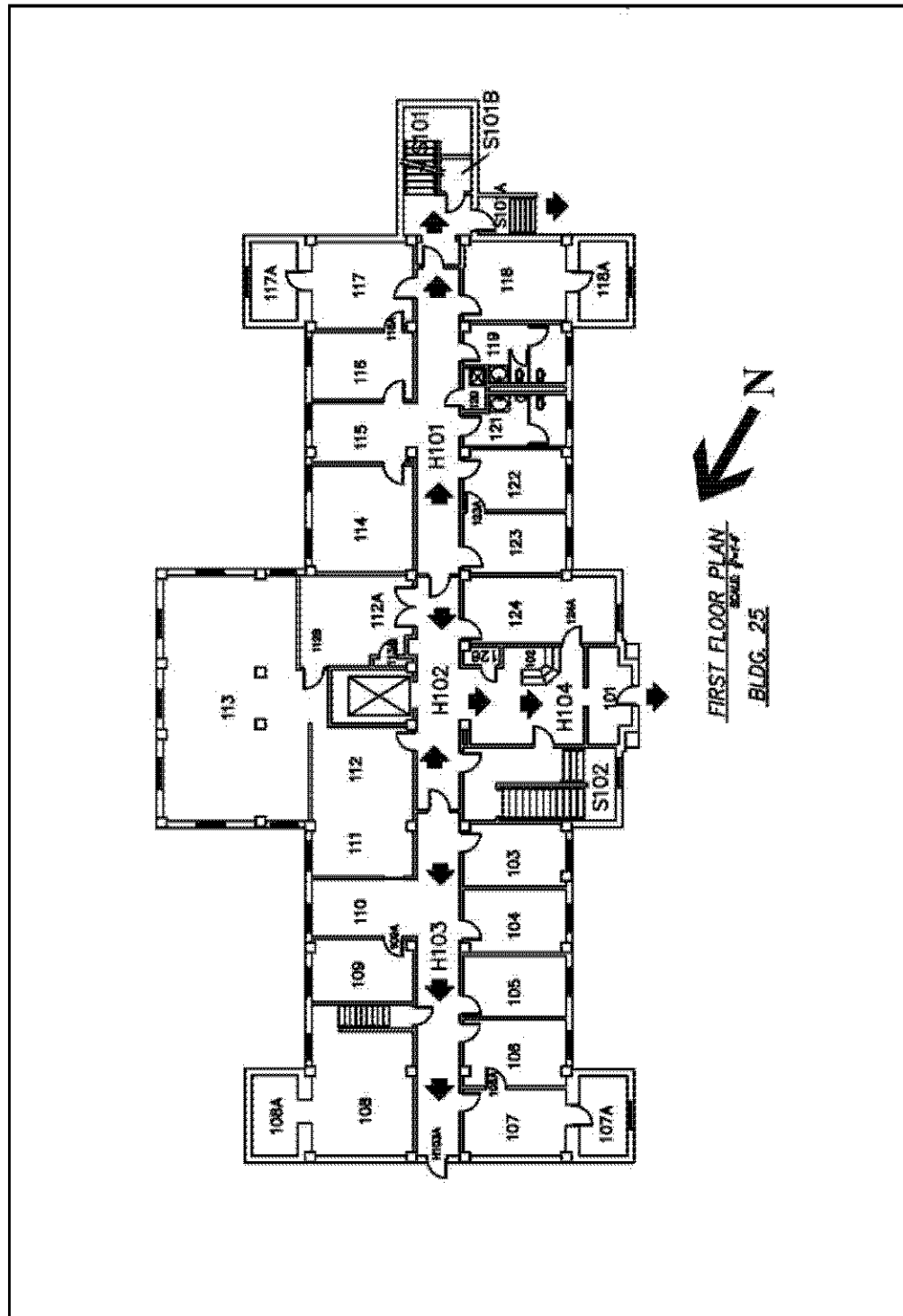
———. *Neuropsychiatric Building, Building No.25, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1929. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Historians:

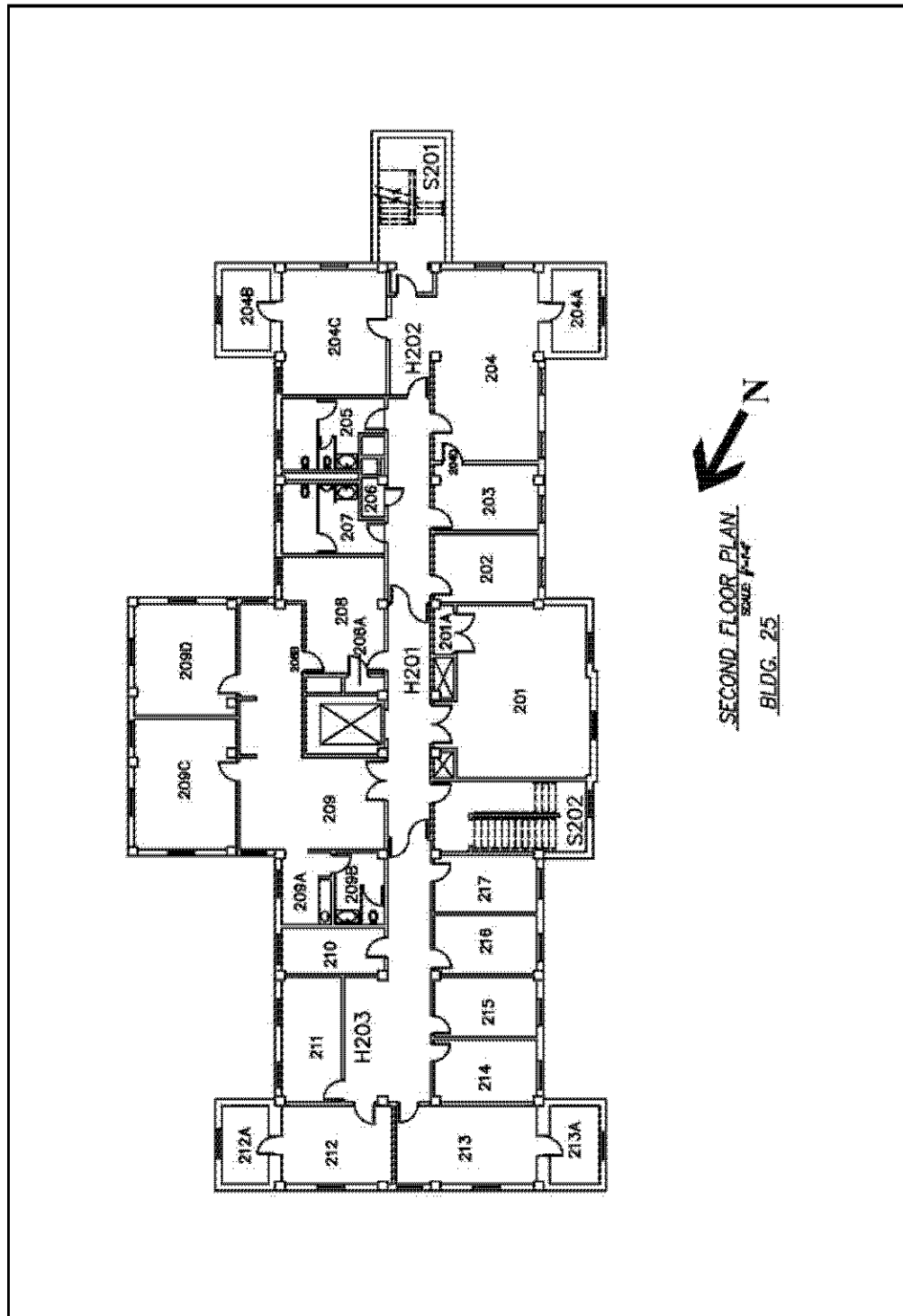
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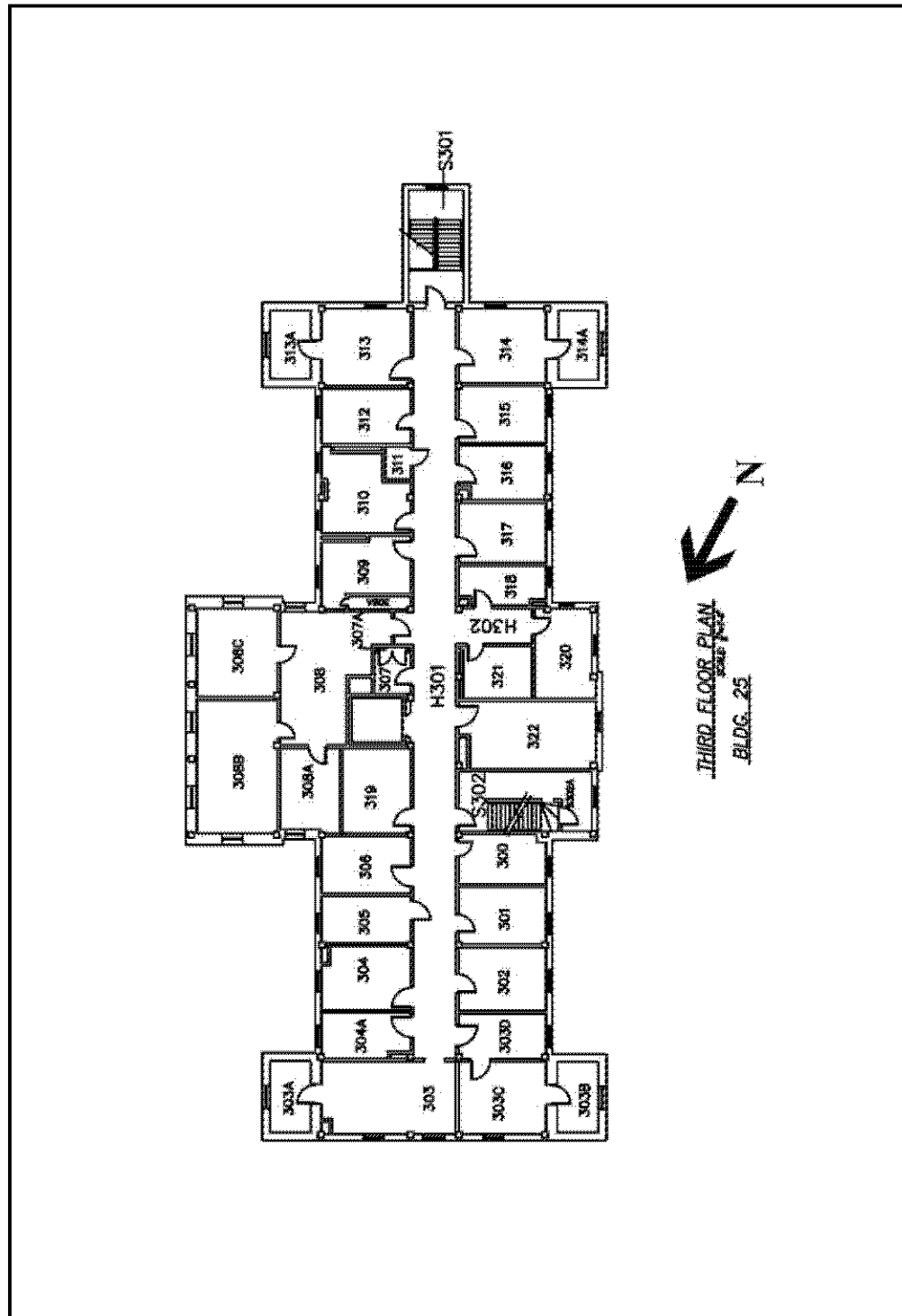
Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25), current floor plan of basement



Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25), current floor plan of first floor

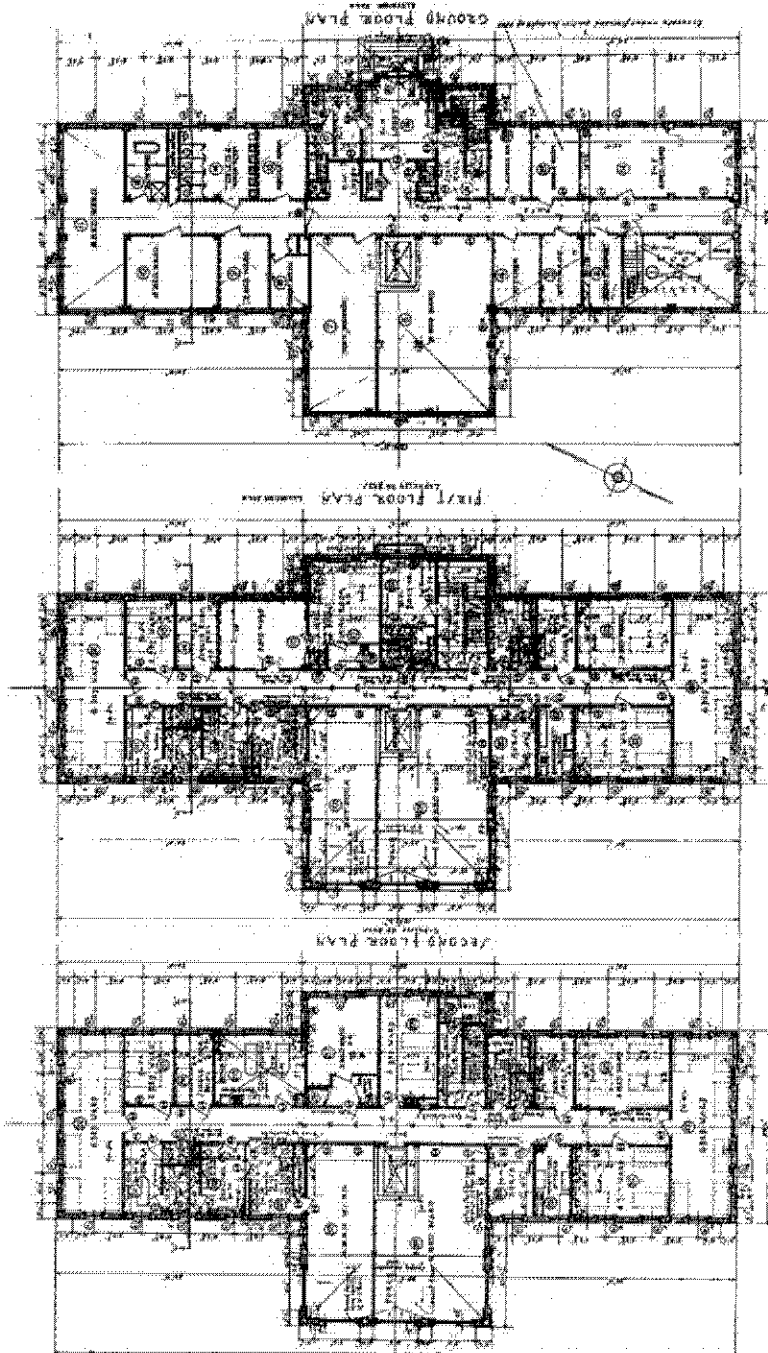


Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25), current floor plan of second floor



Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25), current floor plan of third floor

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Original floor plans for the Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25), 1929